



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Media Advisory

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Mayor Bob Young today called for the consolidation of the City of Augusta's economic development initiatives into a new department of city government. The Mayor's announcement comes on the eve of a joint meeting of the governing bodies and development authorities of Augusta and Columbia County to discuss Augusta's participation in a regional economic development agency.

The Mayor said: "The city has no coordinated plan for economic recovery. The bickering, turf protection and self preservation of public and private organizations must come to an end for the sake of the working families of our entire region."

Mayor Young proposed redirecting the existing funds designated for outside agencies and contractors to create the new Department of Business Development. The amount the city spends already exceeds \$300,000, which the Mayor said would be more than adequate to staff the office with people who have a track record in job creation.

The new department would be responsible for a range of services, including recruiting and retaining industry, seeking new retail, developing small business and promoting Augusta as a retirement destination.

According to Mayor Young, local development authorities and other organizations could then contract with the city department for services and promotion.

Mayor Young said: "Consolidating our efforts will save money and provide focus. We will no longer subsidize separate staffs, different lawyers and office expenses. Likewise, one consolidated agency will see that all areas of economic development receive attention. The department would give attention to all sections of the city."

Mayor Young went on to say: "Our metro area represents a \$14.9 billion dollar economy. The City of Augusta must get its house in order and partner with our regional neighbors to grow even stronger."

The mayor said he has tasked the staff of research similar programs in other cities and to prepare a plan for establishing such an office here. Mayor Young said he will present an outline to the city commissioners in the coming weeks.